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Colin Kaepernick: Moses in a troubled American land

Mary Gravitt Writers' Group

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The Bible, a book of human behavior, I cannot accept as the word of God — too many translations/transliterations in hands wishing to oppress more than uplift. Its didactic parables are, in essence, the religion of the Bible — offers currency. Currency now has to do with civil disobedience and racism in connection with Colin Kaepernick, the NFL and President Trump's rant.

Kaepernick has a commonality with biblical Moses. Kaepernick, biracial, was adopted by a white middle-class family (where he became a son — Exodus 2:10); a quarterback prince in college and professional football; and like Moses, knowing his cultural-heritage, sacrificed position and wealth protesting the police brutality routine to African -American life; and like Moses, married a black woman (Numbers 12:1).

Kaepernick's "lack-of-patriotism" incensed Trump (as Moses's did Pharaoh), whom Eric Alterman in The Nation (Sept. 11) declares Trump has attracted the affection of both American Zionists (neocons) as well as the alt-right (neo-Nazis). Trump's patriotic-right-wing Christian followers believe/label kneeling as a traitorous-unconstitutional act against the flag and insult to the military. (Deuteronomy 5:7-9: "You must never have any other gods against my face; you must not make for yourself an image, any form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or in the waters under the earth ..."). American flags (often Chinese imports) are manmade, graven images; an army, according to the Bible, only succeeds if God directs the battle (Psalms 127:1). Thereby Trump's patriotic rants are paganism's paean to the alt-right's second "shots-heard-round-the world" in Dylann Roof's "Race War."

Cecilia Elizabeth O'Leary's ("To Die For: The Paradox Of American Patriotism") subtitle grew out of the recognition that American identity and loyalty are historically steeped in contradictory patterns and ambivalent relations and political ideals and its everyday practices. Unresolved tensions between ideologies of social equality and individual liberty have driven wedges between the body politic, and sense
earns patriots rev

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becomes a daily plebiscite, an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life."

Quoting post-colonialist-critic, Homi Bhabha: "A nation's existence is also dependent on a strange forgetting of the history of the nation's past: the violence involved in establishing the nation's writ. It's this forgetting — a minus in the origin — that constitutes the beginning of the nation's narrative."

African-Americans, athletes or not, are expected to forget that black lives matter; white Americans are expected to forget — Trumpters, do — that white lives have not mattered since the 1980s, and not kneel.

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O'Leary exposes that activists' roles played by the government depended on the development of patriotic culture in the United States, relying on the initiative of individuals, private business and organized patriots. The government wouldn't make a significant intervention until World War I. Beginning late 19th century, organized patriots initiated campaigns to establish new national anniversaries; lobbied for additions to the nation's pantheon of heroes; urged teaching of U.S. history and civics in public schools; agitated for flag reverence and daily pledges of allegiance; the greatest era in monument building, established national shrines; mapped-out historical pilgrimages; organized petition drives and congressional hearings to legislate patriotism.

Charles H. Long's essay, "Civil Rights-Civil Religion: Visible People and Invisible Religion" extrapolates: "Civil religion emerges as a parallel structure alongside revealed religion and its institutions, or it may borrow symbols from the revealed religion. A great deal of the writings and discussions of American religion has been ideologically serving to enhance, justify, and render sacred the history of European immigrants — not peoples-of-color. The flag and the 'Star Spangled Banner' are the bread and the wine of American Civil Religion that creates an invisibility of Blacks and other peoples-of-color."

Social media/YouTube's visualization makes Black Lives Matter and Kaepernick protests problematic.

Thus, as Long extricates, American political-religion reduced non-Europeans to states of invisibility-citizenlessness. This invisibility in America arises as a fundamental issue of American religious flag worship/patriotic history and is Trump's cause celebre.

Mary Gravitt is an Iowa City resident and member of the Writers' Group.

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